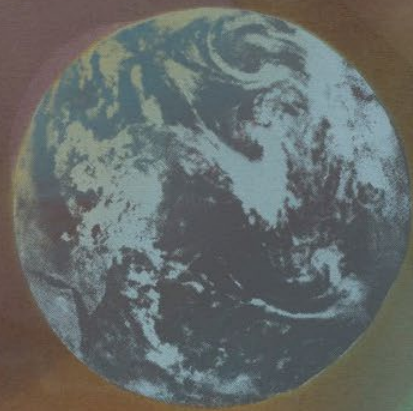


MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

JAY HEIKES
DEVOLVE



JAY HEIKES

DEVOLVE

SEPTEMBER 5 — OCTOBER 5, 2024

"It is somewhat disconcerting, given the record of unending change physically altering artworks, that many people continue to believe that art is immutable, that the artist's intentions are paramount, and that original works should be 'preserved' from various agents of change. Perhaps this is simply a reflection of our desire for stability and order: to think of art (as Seneca said) as something that will endure—unlike life itself. Art does endure, of course, and one reason it endures is because it is able to absorb and incorporate change of various kinds."

— Joseph Grigely, *Textualterity*

"When we are gone, and rows of ants become lines of form, will the artwork take on a new life with new meaning?"

— Jay Heikes

Marianne Boesky Gallery is pleased to present *Devolve*, an exhibition of new work by Jay Heikes (b. 1975; Princeton, NJ). For his sixth solo exhibition with the gallery, Heikes peers into an imagined, post-human future as nature takes hold of the ruins and relics of human society.

Throughout his materially innovative and richly conceptual practice, Heikes continuously reimagines an atlas of signs and symbols and stories, largely of his own creation. Drawing on art's divergent histories—from the material and alchemical preoccupations of Arte Povera to the revolutionary critique of Russian Constructivism to the Romantic fascination with the sublime—Heikes examines themes

of evolution and regeneration, stasis and corrosion, entropy and transformation. Acknowledging that there are no truly new ideas to be had, Heikes turns to what has already been; his practice is in a continual state of borrowing, transposing, appropriating, and reinterpreting old ideas and forms and narratives using a kaleidoscopic array of media, remaining perpetually open to transformation within his work and within himself.

With *Devolve*, Heikes transports viewers to an imagined future—one devoid of human civilization—as plants and animals continue to transform the languishing artifacts of a distant past society. Weaving together inspiration from an array of



Jay Heikes, *Textuality* (2023)

divergent source material—from the creation story told in the Book of Genesis, from Joseph Grigely’s 1995 *Textuality*, from Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, from a dissent in a 2022 New York Court of Appeals decision regarding the fate of Happy the elephant—Heikes reflects on the signs and omens that foretold man’s imminent demise. Through paintings, installations, and a monumental new sculpture, Heikes examines theories of evolution and creationism, notions of agency and authorship, and the inevitable end of our collective march toward progress.

Each work in the exhibition builds on a constellation of allusions—to the history of art, to literary theory, to anthropological and legal discourse, to the artist’s own oeuvre—all embodying the notion of transformation itself. For the titular *Devolve* (2024), Heikes cannibalizes elements of previous bodies of work to reconstruct a series of hooks, descending in height—an evolution chart in reverse. The hook—a recurring motif in the artist’s practice—

brings to mind a litany of referents: a shepherd’s crook, a cane yanking unwelcome performers off stage, a Grim Reaper’s scythe. For Heikes, the *Devolve* hooks—the tallest of which is coated with sand and shellac, the secretions of the lac beetle—represents the cyclical nature of that which is old becoming new once again, the form itself drawing the artist in and out of seduction. Insects claim the surface of Heikes’s painting, too: In *Textuality* (2023), hundreds of subtly rendered black ants trawl across the surface of a splatter-painted canvas. The subject—and title—reference *Textuality*, Grigely’s book, an early edition of which featured a detailed image of a cicada embedded within the enamel house paint of Jackson Pollock’s *Number 1, 1950 (Lavender Mist)* (1950).

The centerpiece of the exhibition—the monumental *Department of Seagulls*—traces the history of humanity through materials: a stone-age slab supports a bronze-age cast sea lion; on its nose, the sea lion balances a Brancusian, wood-age column; a cement-age sphere rests atop

the column; a poly-resin seagull, marking our current material era, stands atop the concrete sphere. With *Department of Seagulls*, Heikes alludes to Marcel Broodthaers's infamous 1968 institutional parody, the *Department of Eagles*—a fictitious department within the Museum of Modern Art. In Heikes's hands, the facetious avian bureau becomes a reminder that the natural world will always have the upper hand—that even at our most satisfied and unsuspecting, a seagull waits nearby, ready to steal your lunch. Ultimately, the work is a meditation on both derivation and the absurdity of creation itself.

At the very end of the exhibition, the viewer encounters a doorway cut into the gallery wall; bright light shines out between the cracks in the handleless, arched wooden door. With *Where the Monks Dance* (2023–2024), Heikes reimagines *Outside World* (2010). For

Outside World, Heikes cut a hole in an exterior wall of the gallery in the shape of a Mack truck radiator cover. Possibly an escape, possibly a wormhole back to an earlier iteration of the work, *Where the Monks Dance*, is an enchanting, seductive symbol: an illuminated passageway that is never accessible and never knowable.

With *Devolve*, Heikes opens a door to a possible future, narrating a tale at once alarming and comforting, bittersweet and anxiety-inducing. Where, Heikes seems to ask, will this endless pursuit of progress eventually lead us? What have we lost along the way? What, he asks us to consider, will be left when we are all gone? Perhaps there is a strange comfort in knowing that the beetles and ants and cicadas and seagulls will continue to reinvent and reimagine human creations when they ultimately inherit the earth. ■

Jay Heikes, *Jägermeister* (2023)





JAY HEIKES

Department of Seagulls, 2024

Bronze, stone, resin, stainless steel, concrete, oak

Overall: 90 3/4 x 46 1/2 x 45 inches, 230.5 x 118.1 x 114.3 cm

Stone & Bronze: 57 1/2 x 46 1/2 x 45 inches, 146.1 x 118.1 x 114.3 cm

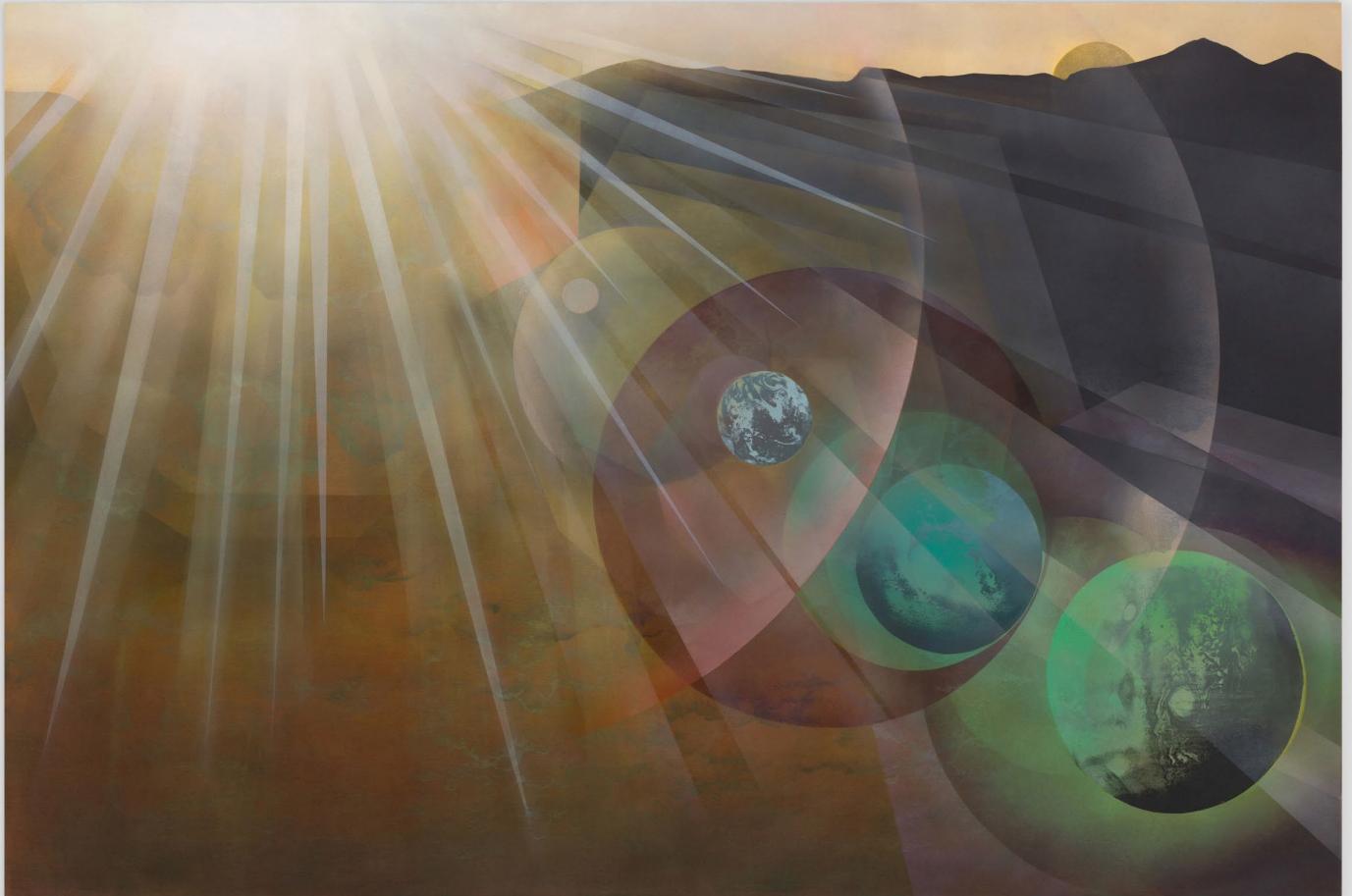
Oak: 38 1/8 x 10 x 9 3/4 inches, 96.8 x 25.4 x 24.8 cm

Concrete: 10 3/4 x 10 x 10 3/4 inches, 27.3 x 25.4 x 27.3 cm

Resin Seagull: 14 x 19 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches, 35.6 x 49.5 x 16.5 cm

JH.20553





JAY HEIKES

Intelligent Design, 2022

Oil on stained canvas

75 1/8 x 112 1/8 inches

190.8 x 284.8 cm

JH.20874



JAY HEIKES

Textuality, 2023

Oil on stained canvas

75 1/8 x 112 1/8 inches

190.8 x 284.8 cm

JH.20878



MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY



JAY HEIKES

Where the Monks Dance, 2024

Wood

71 3/8 x 20 x 3 3/8 inches

181.3 x 50.8 x 8.6 cm

JH.20875

OUTSIDE WORLD (2010)

In a 2019 exhibition at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York, Heikes cut a hole in an exterior wall of the gallery. In the hole, he placed M-shaped apparatus — making reference, at once, to an air vent, window blinds, or the grill of a Mack truck — partially obscuring the view of the adjacent parking lot. *Where the Monks Dance* (2024) builds on *Outside World*. Yet, in this iteration, rather than the mundanity of a parking lot, the viewer sees a mysterious, alluring light behind the gallery wall.

“The notched rectangle was centered at eye level and spanned by parallel white bars to conjure the grill of a Mack truck. Beyond the grill all there was to see was a defiantly unglorious view of the adjacent asphalted parking lot. Less straightforward than this description sounds, the hole/whole was low-key in affect and forceful in effect.”

– Jenelle Porter, “Outside World,” in *Jay Heikes* (2020)



Jay Heikes, *Outside World* (2010)



JAY HEIKES

Owl, 2016

Salt, sawdust, dirt and glue on wood

23 x 18 x 13 inches

58.4 x 45.7 x 33 cm

JH.20809



JAY HEIKES

Salamander's Wool, 2023
Raw silk, hydro-stone, and
carbon pigment
26 x 18 inches
66 x 45.7 cm
JH.20877



JAY HEIKES
Salamander's Wool, 2024
Raw silk, hydro-stone, and
carbon pigment
26 1/8 x 18 1/4 inches
66.4 x 46.4 cm
JH.20955



JAY HEIKES
Salamander's Wool, 2023
Raw silk, hydro-stone, and
carbon pigment
26 x 18 3/4 inches
66 x 47.6 cm
JH.20954





JAY HEIKES
Salamander's Wool, 2023
Raw silk, hydro-stone, and
carbon pigment
26 1/4 x 18 3/4 inches
66.7 x 47.6 cm
JH.21148



JAY HEIKES
Salamander's Wool, 2023
Raw silk, hydro-stone, and
carbon pigment
26 1/4 x 18 1/2 inches
66.7 x 47 cm
JH.21149



JAY HEIKES

Jägermeister, 2023

Oil on stained canvas

75 1/8 x 112 1/8 inches

190.8 x 284.8 cm

JH.20879

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY



JAY HEIKES

Devolve, 2024

Shellac, sand, wood, leather, and iron

108 x 30 3/4 x 15 inches

274.3 x 78.1 x 38.1 cm

JH.21121



JAY HEIKES

Smog City, 2024

Oil on stained canvas

75 x 56 inches

190.5 x 142.2 cm

Framed: 76 5/8 x 57 5/8 inches

194.6 x 146.4 cm

JH.21217





JAY HEIKES

Lily Pad, 2023

Oil, sand, freshwater pearls, BB's on
anodized aluminum
19 1/2 x 20 inches
49.5 x 50.8 cm

JH.21151



JAY HEIKES

Heads Made of Marbles, 2024

Blown glass with marbles and mixed media

11 1/2 x 7 1/8 x 9 1/2 inches

29.2 x 18.1 x 24.1 cm

JH.20871



JAY HEIKES

BORN 1975; PRINCETON, NJ
WORKS IN MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Heikes's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE; the Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, CA; the Aspen Art Museum, CO; and the Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia, PA. His work has been featured in group exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; the Museum of Contemporary Art,

Chicago, IL; MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY; the Bronx Museum of the Arts, NY; and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY. He was also featured in the 2006 Whitney Biennial, curated by Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne, at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY. Heikes earned an MFA from Yale University and a BFA from the University of Michigan. The artist lives in St. Paul and works in Minneapolis, MN. ■

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY

JAY HEIKES

DEVOLVE

SEPTEMBER 5 — OCTOBER 5, 2024

509 WEST 24TH STREET

[VIEW PRESS RELEASE](#)

[DOWNLOAD EXHIBITION CHECKLIST](#)



CHELSEA

509 West 24th Street
New York, NY

ON VIEW

Jay Heikes | *Devolve*
September 5 — October 5

UPCOMING

Hannah Van Bart | Solo Exhibition

CHELSEA

507 West 24th Street
New York, NY

ON VIEW

Gina Beavers | *Divine Consumer*
September 5 — October 5

UPCOMING

Jammie Holmes | Solo Exhibition

ASPEN

616 East Hyman Ave
Aspen, CO

OPEN SUMMERS

212.680.9889
marianneboeskygallery.com
[@MarianneBoeskyGallery](https://www.instagram.com/MarianneBoeskyGallery)

MARIANNE BOESKY GALLERY